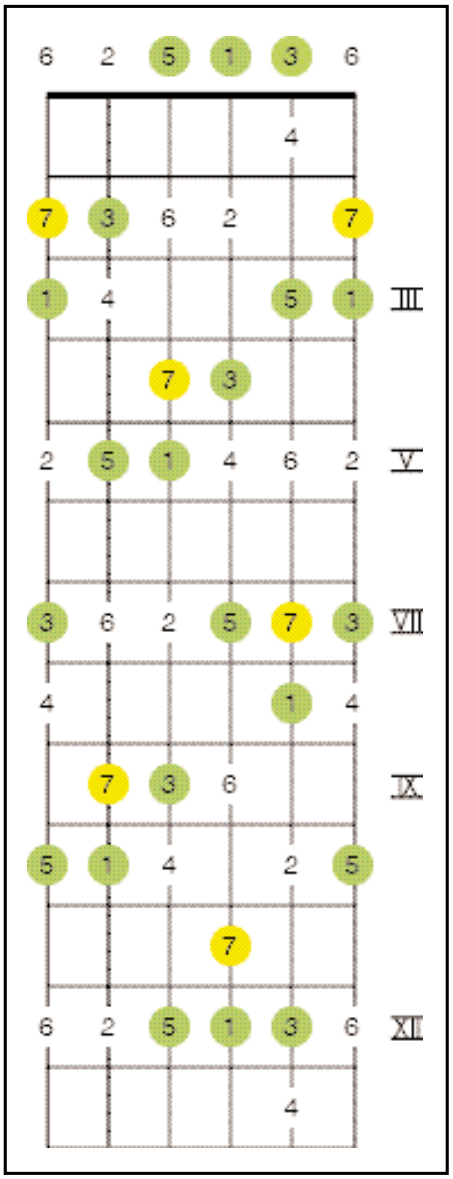

D.I.Y. Chord

BY MICHAEL HOFFMAN

HERE, WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT different ways to voice chords based on a *G* major tonality— lots of them! Each chord voicing has a slightly different sound to it. Some voicings sound full and rich, while others sound open and airy. But rather than just giving you a collection of ready-made chords, I'm offering a fretboard diagram with all the notes we'll need. Putting the notes together is up to you.

In the diagram, you'll see the tones of the *G* major scale. As we'll be referring to them numerically to build our voicings, I've used scale-degree numbers instead of letter names—1=*G*, 2=*A*, 3=*B*, 4=*C*, 5=*D*, 6=*E*, 7=*F*♯. The formula for all major triads (or three-note chords) is 1-3-5. From *G*, that gives us *G*-*B*-*D*. All the 1s, 3s, and 5s in the diagram have been shaded in the diagram to make them easier to locate.

So how many 1-3-5 structures can you find? Lots, right? Well, we're just getting started. Remember, you don't have to voice chords 1-3-5. You can rearrange the chord tones any way you please. All of these are possibilities: 1-3-5, 3-5-1, 5-1-3, 5-3-1, 1-5-3, and 3-1-5. The first three voicings (1-3-5, 3-5-1, and 5-1-3) are called "close-voiced" triads, and are built on adjacent strings; the other three voicings (5-3-1, 1-5-3, and 3-1-5) are called "open-voiced" triads, and these incorporate nonadjacent strings. (Most of the possibilities will be playable in more than one place on the neck. Make sure to find *all* the places a voicing can be rendered.) If you want to build larger voicings using 1, 3, and 5, you can duplicate chord tones. (Our standard, open-

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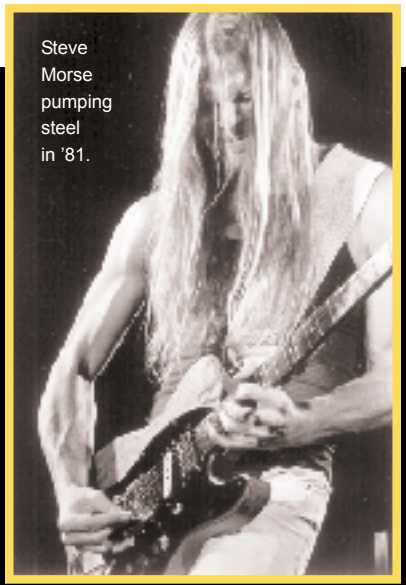
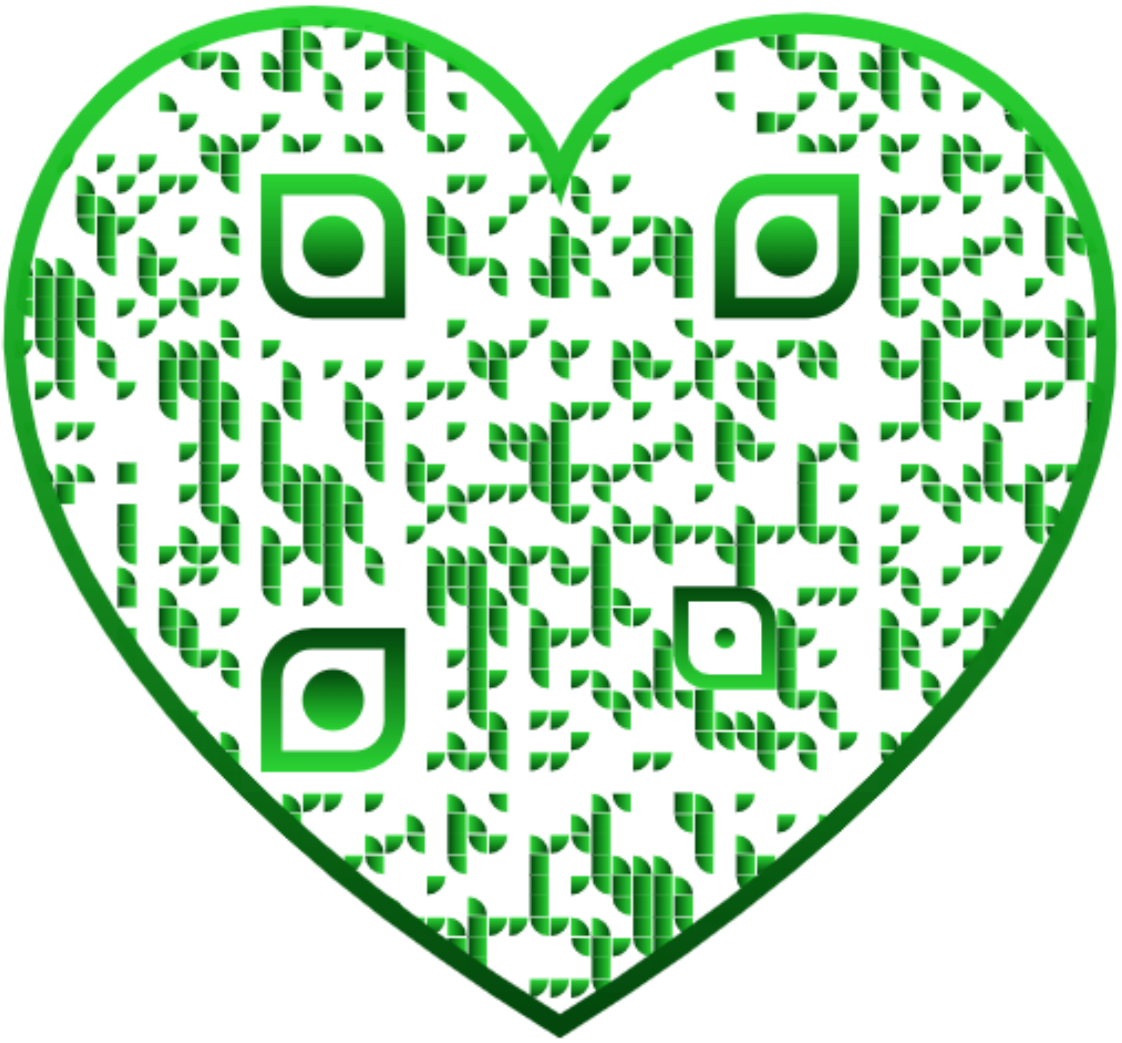


Steve Morse pumping steel in '81.

FOUNDER OF THE PROGRESSIVE INSTRUMENTAL band the Dixie Dregs—and, these days, a member of the hard-rocking Deep Purple—Steve Morse knows his way around the fretboard as well as anybody. In August '82 *GP*, he offered this bit of guitar wisdom: "Anywhere, in any position, you can play lines that will fit all the chords. A problem a lot of people have is that when they get to a different chord, they think they need to shift to a different position—instead of realizing that the notes that will fit *every* chord on the guitar are right there under their fingers."

TIPS JAR

MORSE PHOTO: MARK MANDER



position *E* major chord, for example is voiced 1-5-1-3-5-1, or *E-B-E-G♯-B-E*.)

Once you've got the basic triads under your fingers, you can go fishing for larger chords, such as *Gmaj7*. The same prinicples we used for triad construction apply here. There are four close-voiced chords (1-3-5-7, 3-5-7-1, 5-7-1-3, and 7-1-3-5) and 20 open-voiced chords (1-5-3-7, 3-1-5-7, 5-7-3-1, 5-3-7-1, and so on). You may find some of these voicings impossible to finger. That's okay, just grab the ones you can. The idea here isn't to wreck your hands, but to realize just how many different ways there are to voice any particular chord—and how each regrouping of the chord tones has its own flavor.

Michael Hoffman is the author of *Serious Guitar*. You can learn more about Hoffman and his book at seriousguitar.com.

SESSIONS